



Natomas Oral Histories

2015/027

Oral interview of

Burton Lauppe

March 10, 2001

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This is not a verbatim transcript. Parts of the interview have been paraphrased.

Anne: We are at the home of Burton and Kay Lauppe. We are going to be hearing a little bit about Mr. Lauppe's history and memories about Natomas. The date is March 10, 2001. My name is Anne Ofsink. Burt, would you tell us about how your family originally came into California and Natomas, and how you happen to be here now in Sutter County.

[00:00:42]

Burt: Well, originally they started, like I said, in Switzerland and came to California. My great-grandfather ran a 16-mile house in the old days, on what is highway 80 now, where they would board the horses as they were transporting stuff over the Sierras in the gold rush days.

Anne: Oh.

Burt: He had several children — I forget now how many. My grandfather and his kids then started around the Antelope area and fanned up there. One of them was my dad. He farmed with his brother in the Antelope area. His uncle, which was my grandfather's brother, came down to Natomas and bought a piece of ground on Bayou Way and Powerline Road, on the north end of it. For several years, my dad came down and helped him farm it. Eventually, he bought 80 acres there on Bayou Way. They built the levee in 1915. There was only one road and that was Powerline Road. It was the only one that was paved. Once you got off that, you were stuck in the mud, in the wintertime. It was just you couldn't go.

Anne: I can imagine the difficulty.

[00:02:19]

Burt: So, he would come down here to farm in the summertime, and then would go back. He had an almond orchard up in Citrus Heights. He would go back up there and take care of the almonds, and then in the spring they would come down and farm here. My uncle bought a Caterpillar 45 tractor, which was quite a thing in those days. They used to drive that down the old Grantline Road through Rio Linda to farm down here in the district. Of course, they didn't have anything heavy enough to transport it other than the railroad, and they didn't have that down here, so they just drove it. It only went about three or four miles per hour, so it took them all day to drive from Antelope to here in the district. They would use it to plow up the ground here in the district, then in the wintertime, they'd have to drive it back to Antelope again to farm up there.

Anne: Incredible.

Burt: I always get a kick out of the area up there now. I remember Dad bought a brand-new Model D John Deere and they drove that out from Roseville off the flatcar out to Antelope, put the drowers on out there in the field.

Anne: What are drowers?

Burt: That's the—

Anne: Rubber things on the wheels?

Burt: No, they were all steel then. The drowers were just the sharp points on the wheel, which would give you traction.

Anne: All right. Drowser.

Burt: They couldn't very well drive it down the road with those things on there.

Anne: No, not very well.

Burt: So, they had to put those on in the field. I was about 8 years old and I wanted to drive that tractor. My dad let me harrow in the wheat out there in a field just west of Rusch Park, mainly because I couldn't hit anything there. There wasn't anything there, just one oak tree in the middle of the field. Nowadays, I get a kick driving out there because it is wall-to-wall houses now.

Anne: Right! Exactly.

[00:04:37]

Burt: Anyhow, for several years Dad would come down — we had a house on the 80 acres there and he would live and farm here during the summer time. Then we'd have to go back up in the wintertime because you couldn't get anywhere. Once you got off Powerline Road, you were stuck in the mud. The Powerline Road, it was not like the roads today. They assessed every parcel of land a mile on each side of the Powerline Road for that road. It was on their taxes for years.

Anne: Oh, they did?

Burt: It got paid off sometime in the '30s. Everybody here used it, but just those people a mile on each side of the road paid for the construction of Powerline Road, through the old Natomas Company. It was part of a Natomas Company deal, I guess.

Anne: Interesting how they work those things out.

Burt: It was a time when they were just coming out with blacktop and somehow or another this blacktop had cement or something in it that was pretty good. They laid a two-by-four — if you dig down by the Powerline Road, you can still see it, the two-by-four form on either side of the road to pour the blacktop and steamed it all. That has held up for years because, in spite of some patches by the county, the original is still under there and not any wider in most places than when they built it in 1915. It held up pretty good considering that when they built the levees they used the sand out of the river to make the cement, and when they had the levees they were all concrete. They had a concrete road on top of them that they poured. It's maybe 2½ or 3 inches, not too thick, but then in those days it was an A-number-one road because it was a concrete paved road on top of the levee to watch the levee and everything else. Well, during that time they raised a lot of alfalfa in the district. Trucks with solid rubber tires came out to haul the hay around. Solid rubber tires on concrete didn't help to make the concrete last very long. It cracked up pretty good. I went to school in the first grade up in Sylvan Corners.

[00:07:23]

Anne: Now Sylvan Corners, excuse me, that was over where Rusch Park is?

Burt: Yes, that was up on the old Auburn Road.

Anne: Ok.

Burt: I was in first grade, but then I came down. We moved here in about — well, he built the house here to be permanent. I guess it would be in '32 that we moved down here. Before that, we'd go back and forth. I was pretty young then, but my sister did go to that original school that was on Schoolhouse Road. It still was the Schoolhouse Road at Elkhorn Road on the corner of that. That burned down.

Anne: Did they call it the American Basin School?

Burt: That was the American Basin. Well, I don't know what they called the school then. I guess it was. It was American Basin.

Anne: Ok.

Burt: It burned down. Then for a couple of years they were building the new school, a Charlie White and a Mr. Frank. I don't know what his first name was. Frank worked for the Natomas Company. He was an engineer, too. He kind of designed and built the new American Basin School. In the meantime, Charlie White, who was on the school board, had an old chicken house over there. So, for a couple of years, at least one year anyhow, they had school in that chicken house while they were building the new American Basin School. It was further down the road from Schoolhouse, about a mile I guess.

Anne: In a chicken coop! So, it was not on the same site.

Burt: No, it was not built on the same site. In fact, the Sacramento Airport runway took out the American Basin School later.

[00:09:14]

Anne: Yes. When we take our historical society tour, we go up as far as we can go and then just point in the general direction where it might have been.

Burt: This Frank was real up-to-date. It was a two-room school with a big auditorium. They finished the two schoolrooms. The auditorium was never finished for years; it was just two-by-fours for the walls when I went to school. That was where we would get to play when it was raining.

Anne: Interesting.

Burt: He had a balcony over there that was never finished. Boards were sticking out all the time. A place for a movie theater was designed behind the balcony. That was way back. They didn't even have talkies yet. Here he was designing a school with that on it. It was wood siding and he put concrete around so they would eventually put brick veneer and all of that stuff, but they never got that far. They just got the boards and the two-room school. They consolidated with Jefferson School and built the new one down on Del Paso Road.

Anne: This Frank that you were referring to, is that a last name? It seems like I've heard of a Frank.

Burt: Frank. I can't remember his name. What was his first name?

Kay: Was it Carol's family?

Burt: Carol's mother, Mrs. Frank—

Kay: Real nice lady.

Anne: I've seen the Frank name. I'm sure we could find it. I was just double-checking.

Burt: He was another engineer for the Natomas Company. He did a lot a work for the irrigation system here in Natomas where they pumped the water out. He made a lot of these concrete objects. They were weird, is what they were. He made a concrete slab with a slot in it. You would put that in the ditch and you could slide a board up and down in the slot and control the water in the ditches.

Anne: It seems like I've seen them.

Burt: There are a lot of them scattered around this district.

Anne: You see the ditches, and then this cement thing with a hole, and boards that would get lifted to let the water through. Is that right?

[00:11:54]

Burt: Yes, they made a lot of those and they always blamed Frank on them because, I don't know, he designed them or something. They made a lot of them and put them all over. Then the ditches got filled in, the cement slabs got buried and then years later you would still run into those concrete slabs every once in a while, while you were plowing. It was just a part of the deal, I guess.

Anne: That is funny, but I can see how it would have been frustrating to the person plowing.

Burt: We didn't even have power when we first came on Bayou Way. I think there was power on Powerline Road, but it didn't come into Bayou Way. We were only here in the summertime, so I guess they never pushed it. We didn't have power there until I built the house in about '29 or '30, '32, somewhere in there. That was quite a deal when you finally got the power. I can still remember beating the Coleman light to bed. You'd turn it off and run and try to hit the bed before it went out. It took a while for it to go off.

Anne: So funny. Let me get this straight. You were over there on Powerline, which is not where we are sitting now. We're over on Garden Highway. When did you come here?

Burt: Originally, my folks' place was down on Powerline and Bayou Way just east of Powerline about a mile or so.

Anne: Is that still sitting there?

Burt: The brick house is still there.

Anne: A brick house. Ok.

Kay: Also a barn and the smaller house.

Burt: Yes.

Anne: What is the address there?

Kay: We still own that home.

Anne: Ok.

Burt: What is it, 4690 W, I think.

Anne: 4690 W?

Burt: Originally it was 243. The box number was 243 and our mailbox was on the end of Powerline up on the Garden Highway. We had to go clear down there to get our mail. As more people came out, it became 1243. They just added a thousand onto it. Finally, they got the thing down to Powerline Road and then we went to 4690. I'm not sure but I think that is right.

Anne: So that is where you were raised then.

[00:14:46]

Burt: Yes mostly, and went to American Basin School and from there to Grant High School.

Anne: Ok.

Kay: Were you there in the first grade, honey? Weren't you at Rusch Park?

Burt: No, I was at Sylvan Corners in Citrus Heights in first grade. I might have had half here and half there in the second grade. Meanwhile dad was building the house and we lived in a house on H Street that belonged to my grandfather.

Anne: Oh, you were living in Sacramento.

Burt: Yes, in Sacramento somehow while the house was being built. I don't know why. I guess it was closer than coming all the way down from Citrus Heights.

Anne: Sounds like it maybe was.

Burt: I think he had sold the house up there, so we had to live in Grandpa's house for a year. In the second grade I went to the school right there on H Street right behind the post office. They were just building the new post office there on I Street. I can remember playing underneath the sidewalk with one of the kids there. They had torn the old buildings down and they hadn't started the new building yet. I went to second grade there in an old wooden school along the railroad tracks down on G Street.

Anne: That's interesting. How many siblings did you have?

Burt: I had a sister. She passed away here in December.

Anne: Oh, I'm sorry.

Burt: She was seven years older than I am.

Anne: She was there in Sacramento with you.

[00:17:04]

Burt: She had gone to Sylvan Corners more than I, so she finished the eighth grade there, living with my grandfather in Citrus Heights. She didn't want to break away from all her friends to come down here. She came when we moved down here and started going to high school. All different ones in the district pooled their cars and drove to the high school, which was Sacramento High School because there wasn't any Grant High at the time.

Anne: Oh, really.

Burt: Then they built Grant while I was going to grammar school out here. In fact, they called it "chicken houses" at first. They threw it up in about a year. It was all wooden buildings.

Anne: Interesting.

Burt: The power line came in finally. Then they built the phone line, and I'm not sure who it was. The Natomas Company had three lines all the way around the levee. They were the 4-5 line and I don't know what the others were. We had the 4-3, 4-4 lines. Anyway, we had three in the district. The farmers all went together and had a cooperative phone line. It was old hot poles, was what it was. Redwood square poles stuck all up and down the road. They put in the telephone line, and in those days, why, there was two wires and the most you would ever get was four people on one side and four people on the other. So, you'd have eight people on the line. We had eight people on the 4-3 line, eight on the 4-4 line, and eight on the 4-5 line. Our number was 4-4-F-4, so it would have four rings on the telephone. If it rang three, you didn't answer it. If it rang four, you'd answer the phone.

Anne: Four rings was your signal.

Burt: Dad ended up as president of the phone line, so he had to take care of the thing. I was old enough to climb poles by then, so you know who took care of the telephone lines whenever they went out.

Anne: I'll bet you got really familiar with them.

[00:20:14]

Burt: I knew where all the new phones were in the district and knew where the people kept their phone and everything else.

Anne: Probably also a lot of the scuttlebutt that was going on around the area too.

Burt: Well, not that well, but when you picked up the phone and someone was talking. The Natomas Company had a pole all the way up here at Verona that crossed the river. There were a few subscribers for them on the other side of the river. For years there was an old telephone pole that was spliced together way up in the air with guy-wires and everything else to get the telephone wire across the river at Verona. It had to be high enough to get over any of the steamboats that would come by and everything else. They were way up in the air.

Anne: They must have needed to be pretty high.

Burt: I think there were two lines that went over the river there.

Anne: While we're mentioning Verona, do you have anything else that you recall at all about Verona? We have an 1849 map here that we have been looking at. The map says Vernon. We know that the name got changed at one point. Another member of the historical society this morning and I talked about how there was another Vernon somewhere and so the name needed to be changed.

Burt: I think that's what it was. I'm not sure. There's a lot of Veronas, too.

Anne: Oh really?

Burt: We didn't come up here [Sutter County] until after the war. We bought this ground in '54 and built the house in, what, '57.

Kay: We moved here in '57.

Anne: We're, what, about a mile off Riego, on the Garden Highway?

Burt: A mile north of Riego Road.

Anne: Ok, so you say you came up and built it in 50-something?

Burt: We were building it in '55 when there was a flood in other districts.

[00:22:48]

Anne: Oh, a distinctive year. Did you raise the ground here?

Burt: No, this mound was here originally. When they built the levees, they threw the dirt out of the river with a clam bucket and built this mound. Albert Lingey owned the place before. I'm not sure if he was here when they built the levees, but I bought it from his heirs. There was a dairy here and a big hay barn on top of this mound. It seeps pretty good when the river gets up above our ground level, so that's why the mound would keep your hay up pretty high. I don't know how they ever raised dairy out here, walking around in the mud. It was pretty wet in the wintertime. Just the year before I bought this place, he filled the barn up with hay. I guess it was a little too green because the barn burned down.

Anne: Oh no!

Burt: So, when I built this house, I used some of the sand from the mound in the concrete. So, it's not the best concrete but—

Anne: You're saying that his name is on one of the boards upstairs.

Burt: Some of the wood from the barn was left and so I used some of the wood from the barn to build this house, which is why his name is on one of the rafters here.

Anne: I see.

Burt: When his wood came from the lumber company, it had his name on, way back then.

Anne: Ok. You were talking about, before I interrupted with the Verona story, the job you had of needing to get up on the poles to repair the phone lines.

[00:25:13]

Burt: Well, yes, that was quite a bit of trouble because the poles were quite a ways apart and they were all galvanized wire. Plus, the birds would land on them and take off in a hurry and snap them together and get the wires crossed. You would then have to go out and find where they were crossed and uncross the wires. In those days, hay was baled with 5-wire bales and you couldn't lift a 5-wire bale — you had to have a crane. All the farmers would have a loader with a boom. It would pick up the 5-wire bale and load the truck. Well, the boom stuck up pretty high in the air. There were places that we could keep the wire up high enough so they could get under, but sometimes they wouldn't always get in the right place when they left. So, when they'd leave, they would tear out the telephone wire when they'd go. They were probably afraid that they would get in trouble, so they wouldn't tell us anything. That was the worst part. If they had told us where it was, it probably wouldn't have taken long to fix it. Instead, you'd have to drive the whole line to find out where they had broken it. You kind of knew where in your district they were hauling hay, so that would be the first place you would go check.

Anne: So, the line went from Verona—

Burt: The Natomas Company line went from across the river to just a couple of people on the other side of the river and then down the Garden Highway into town.

Anne: Oh.

Burt: Our line, we had the 4-3 line, it was down in the Jefferson district. It ran San Juan Road and down in that area. The 4-4 line came up and ran Powerline Road. The 4-5 went up Elkhorn Road and up that way.

Anne: How would they decide how long a line was supposed to be?

Burt: Well, it was where four on one side and four on the other. Twenty-four subscribers with three lines were all that we had. There were not too many people out here then. We went down and tied the end to Ma Bell's line down there where the old Jibboom Street Bridge was, way down there in Gardenland. A wooden bridge ran across there and that's where we tied into Pacific Bell's line. The 4-5 line ran down there, too.

[00:28:29]

Anne: That was interesting. Now, Burt, let's go to the topic of school days here in Natomas.

Burt: It was kind of a small school, so we had two teachers, Mrs. Shaul and Mrs. Haenggi. She later married and she was a Solander. When I first started, they had a school bus. Cooper drove the bus. I don't know where he got the bus body, but he set it on a flatbed truck and that was what we rode on. It didn't even have windows in it. It had curtains on the side. I was pretty young, because I remember he used to have to pick me up and lift me into the seats, and then he'd close the door. He used to drive down and there was a service station down the Garden Highway by the Elkhorn Ferry. I'm not sure if the

Whites ran it or not. I can still remember him getting gas there one day, and so he gave everybody a stick of gum. That was pretty good.

Anne: So, there were no windows. You were just inside this dark box.

Burt: Well, no, it was open. It had some curtains to keep the rain out. It was pretty crude. It wouldn't pass OSHA or anything like that today. That is for sure. It didn't last too long. By the time I was in third or fourth grade, I was riding my bicycle to school every day. It was about 4 or 5 miles.

[00:31:06]

Anne: That was a stretch.

Burt: Bayou was still a gravel road. It was good pedaling on Powerline. Elkhorn was halfway gravel and halfway tar on it. It was not the best riding. When it rained, I was fortunate enough to be able to ride with the schoolteachers who came in from Sacramento each day. I think Mrs. Shaul came from the east side of Sacramento each day, and after picking up Mrs. Solander, would drive down Powerline Road so I could get a ride into school.

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BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2.

Anne: You were giving us the names of who were there with you getting a ride into school when the tape ended.

Burt: Oh, there was Junior Ferreira, Delores, his sister, who is Delores Barandas now. There was Helen Alameda — she got on with us there at Bayou Way. Of course, it was just on rainy days. You always liked to ride the bicycle rather than ride with the schoolteachers to school because they would stay after school and then you'd have to wait for them before you could get home, or walk. If you rode your bicycle to school, you could jump on it and be home in a hurry. It wasn't too bad.

Anne: So, then you were about in fourth grade you were saying.

Burt: Mrs. Shaul taught from the first through the fourth grade, and then Solander taught from the fifth to the eighth grade.

[00:33:08]

Anne: Were you involved in 4-H? Were you meeting with an adult at the River Ranch?

Burt: Oh yes. The River Ranch person you are speaking about was Vernon Gerber. He was quite a 4-H leader, but later on. When I was in 4-H, Mrs. Stall was the 4-H leader. I raised some chickens in the 4-H, but they didn't look like anything. I'd haul those chickens into town and try to sell them. I was instructed to take them further down the street where someone would buy them who was not so particular about what they looked like. I took them to where I was instructed and did in fact get rid of my chickens. The *[unintelligible]* All-Star recruiter came out about the same time as the 4-H was starting. I was just starting high school. The recruiter thought I would be a good All-Star for some reason or another. I went into the band at the high school. I thought that would be good. To join the band, you had to have white pants because the uniform came with a dark coat and you would put the dark coat on with your white pants. Mom always said the only reason I was an All-Star was that I had a pair of white pants.

Anne: That is funny! What instrument did you play?

Burt: I had taken piano lessons, so I thought I'd try playing a trumpet. Well, he didn't have any trumpets, but he had a French horn, so I carried that thing around to football games and everything. It only lasted for a year.

Anne: That is an interesting horn for a football game, it seems to me.

Burt: Well it played the, you know, da, ta, da, ta, da. It played the off-beat all the time. It wasn't really a French horn; it was an alto. It was shaped like a French horn. Anyhow, the Grant band used to go to San Francisco and all around. I had a good time for a year.

Anne: What happened after a year? Did you quit or did the band not need an alto?

Burt: Well, I was tall and the basketball coach saw me playing basketball in the gym one day and told me to come out for basketball. I played basketball from then on and couldn't play them the same night. It was a good thing. The band was a lot of fun, but most of the band members were just there to spell out the letters. We had a few good players that carried the rest of us.

Anne: I remember a similar situation.

Burt: I remember getting up into high school and going out for 4-H then. That was with Basil Clarke and all of those Inderkums. We would go into skating parties. I know George Inderkum — his folks had a dairy down there and had a big Packard. Everybody would get in the Packard and go ice skating.

[00:36:58]

Anne: Where would you go for ice skating?

Burt: They had an ice skating rink in West Sacramento years ago. I don't know whatever happened to it. It closed up. Going to high school, I'd ride the bus. They had a bus when the Grant district came in. Rutherford came out. They had an up-and-coming principal over there. He started down in Galt and built up the high school down there. I guess the taxpayers finally got rid of him when he wanted to put in an airstrip down there to fly airplanes for the high school. Then he came up to Grant. Here was all this open ground that didn't belong to a high school district and he could see all those assessments and everything else. He came in and took over the Grant district and started building it up. Then we had buses to pick us up to go to high school. In those years, this district used to flood. The pumps would take care of an inch in 24 hours of rain. Sometimes we'd get an inch and a half of rain. When you did that, you generally had a storm. The power was off during your storm, so that would back things up and it would take them quite a while to get the water off. I got pictures of down there on Bayou Way where our house had just a lake all the way around it.

Anne: Oh my.

Burt: Going to high school I can remember going through a foot of water, down San Juan Road along that section there where the "Y" is, where the two canals come together.

Anne: A lot of water!

Burt: I don't know why they keep building these houses out here and paving the thing over. Hopefully they keep getting more and more pumps.

Anne: That's right.

Burt: The water table is pretty high in this district, and if the power doesn't go off, everything is going to be fine, but as I say when you get the storms and you quit pumping, then you have problems with the drainage out here. They have not had a good wet winter yet here since they started building some of these homes. That's the lower end of the district down there. We're on the higher end.

[00:40:06]

Anne: You were talking a bit about high school events.

Burt: Well, yes. The 4-H was a nice group to be in. We all knew each other to begin with. We all went to grammar school together. There were not too many families out here.

Anne: You were doing chickens the whole time?

Burt: Well, chickens and I raised a hog, too. I don't want to mention too much about that. It gets pretty warm here in the summertime and I had him out in the backyard and I watered him and everything else. I think we were harvesting barley at the time — I don't know if I was pulling the tractor or tending the header, but anyhow, I spent all day with the harvester. When I got home, here was my poor hog all laid out. He'd kicked over the water can and hadn't had any water all day. He was laying there on the ground and I didn't know anything about it, I guess. You were just supposed to kind of sprinkle a bit of water on his nose, you know, and survive him. Well, I got a bucket of water and threw it on top of him and that killed him right off. Everything quit when I got that cold water on him. The worst part of it was that dad made me dig a hole big enough to bury the hog. That was the hardest part of the whole deal. So, that was one of my 4-H projects.

Anne: Ok, chickens and pigs. Did you move on to another animal?

Burt: Yes.

Anne: Ok. What did kids do for fun?

Burt: We had baseball teams. The 4-H would get some guys together and you would play baseball over at the grammar school. We would pedal over to your neighbor's and go fishing with them or something. This was quite a ways to pedal. Most of the kids in those days worked when you came home from school. You generally had a job, either milking the cow or helping bale or bucking hay or something.

Anne: Not a lot of free time.

[00:42:54]

Burt: Yes. In the '30s I can remember Mom going into town and trading eggs for groceries, you know. It was kind of rough at that time. Most of us, what fun we had was later on when we got a little older and could drive cars. Then we could get into town. Before that, as younger kids, we really didn't have too much. We'd have the 4-H meeting, and what socializing we'd do would be with the kids at school. You

didn't have anything afterwards when you went home. Everybody was not down at the end of the block; they were 7 or 8 miles across the district.

Anne: What was the appeal of going into town when you had a car?

Burt: Well, mainly going into town you went to the movies on Saturday. We went shopping and then go to a movie if there was a good movie. My grandfather lived with us. When my grandmother passed away, he came out and lived with us. He would take us to the movies all the time.

Kay: Also, to baseball games.

Burt: Yes, we would go to the baseball games at Mooring Park.

Anne: Do you remember any particular movie?

Burt: *Gone with the Wind* is about all.

Anne: Ok. Right. What about shopping?

Burt: The Sacramento River would be kind of like the Mississippi River because it was close to Hollywood. They would come up here and film movies. In fact, that Will Rogers movie was made up here right off the end of the Powerline Road.

Anne: Oh, really.

Burt: I can remember the old paddle wheelers that they had on the river that were in the movies. I think it was Inderkum that — the films were black and white in those days. Red showed up blacker than black did on your film, so they needed some cows for the Will Rogers movie. They went to Inderkums and wanted a red Holstein. Well, Holsteins only come in black and white. They wanted a red Holstein. So, they went along with it good and sent some up to Maggans Dairy. They sent them up to the River Ranch. Finally somebody told them that Holsteins only come in black and white. They did end up finally getting a Holstein and painting the thing with red paint where the black was, for the movie.

Kay: There's a good story.

Anne: Yes, that's a good story. That is great!

Burt: I thought the Inderkums would have told you that. That was way back.

Anne: That is good.

Burt: Then we had movies here one time.

[00:46:17]

Anne: You were mentioning the river boats, that brings me to the question about the ferry.

Burt: Well, the Elkhorn ferry was the only way to get to Woodland or to anywhere over there unless you went all the way into Sacramento and back again. We did farm some ground across the river. The ferry

would quit after a certain time, and lots of times we would not be there and would have to go all the way into Sacramento and all the way around again to get home. The biggest thing was moving the harvesters across the river on that ferry. When you put a harvester on it, there wasn't much freeboard left on the ferryboat. Then you would have to drag it up the levee on the other side. It was a scary situation moving equipment across on the ferry.

Anne: I never thought of them using the ferry for moving equipment.

Burt: Oh, they moved sheep and everything else across on the ferry. The river used to get down and they would have to put the dragline on the ferry and dig the channel out every once and a while so it would get over this bank in the summertime. It would get down that low. It would get kind of sandy on this side. The channel was on the other side. The ferry had one longer gaff motor on it to begin with, that I can remember. Later on, they put a six-cylinder engine on it. It used to sound different with that one on it, pop-pop-popping as you were going across.

Kay: Tell them about your dad being on the high school board.

[00:48:16]

Burt: Oh, yes. Dad was on the high school board for years. That was after I graduated. When I graduated from high school, I went into junior college and then the war started. Actually, the war started when I was in high school. I got drafted in junior college.

Anne: Which junior college?

Burt: Sacramento Junior College. I was drafted from there. I went down to the draft board and got to the end of the line and they asked me if I wanted land or sea forces. I thought I'd take sea forces because at least you'd have a clean bed. If it weren't there, you wouldn't need it anyway. I went in the navy then. You asked about the Natomas Japanese earlier. We had one Japanese family in the district, the Yurakawas. They had a truck farm. Well I guess there were also Chinese down in the lower district, but I didn't know about them. This Japanese family I was mentioning had a truck farm here. When my grandfather died, they were leasing ground down here. They had made some money and their kids were bigger, so they bought my grandfather's place up in Citrus Heights. The war started. Dad was up in Citrus Heights. He had different lots up there. I was riding around with Dad collecting rents and listening to the radio when the Pearl Harbor situation came on. It was Sunday. They rounded up all the Japanese. This family had been in this district most of the time. The father and mother were Japanese, they took the Japanese paper, but the kids were all raised here and had gone to school with us, and everything else. They didn't know any other Japanese kids as such. However, when they moved up to Citrus Heights they began to know more Japanese kids who were from the Loomis area. They were all taken off, "interned," was what it was. So, they owned a truck and sharp tools and everything else. My dad went and loaded them up and brought the truck and tools down here. We kept them the whole time they were interned. I guess we bought the truck from them. It was an old Ford truck. Anyhow, we went up there and saw that they were loading up and going over. I was talking to one of the kids. I learned that they had to go over to Roseville first and register. So, they went over to Roseville and were getting ready to be put on the train. I don't know where they were going. This kid said to me, "There was nothing but these sneaky Japs there." He was Japanese himself. Anyhow, the kids I think, two of them, went into the army and I guess the other one ended up back in Chicago someplace. The kids left this area.

[00:51:47]

Anne: Did they ever come back for the tools you were saving for them?

Burt: They came back. They must have sold the place, I don't know. Hiroshi and the rest of them all went in to other things. They are still around. He retired from the Postal Service.

Anne: Oh great.

Burt: They were all tall. Their father was a truck farmer and he raised things. For some reason, the kids were all as tall as we were. Tall Japanese. The old man would always say, "They no good, built too far from the ground." The kids never wanted to stoop to the ground to work the strawberries. They didn't want to stoop down that far.

Anne: Not a good model, the older man thought. Right? That is interesting. So, the war memories include you in the navy. You were gone for — is that a four-year or six-year commitment?

Burt: I was drafted and the war ended. It was three years wasn't it?

Kay: Didn't you go in in '42?

Burt: '43, '44 and '45. That was when my dad bought this piece just south of me. I inherited it from him and then bought this piece later on. He bought his piece during the war. He was trying to build grain bins and everything else when everything was being shipped for the war effort you know. He could hardly even get nails. They had a struggle during the war. I didn't hear about it. I know he was needing a tractor. The old one was wearing out. I think he finally got an old used tractor from out of the logging district that was pretty well beat up. I was on an LST during the war as a signalman. We went in on D-Day over in France and there were tractors all over the beach. We'd unload the tanks — they would get off on the sand and they were too heavy for the dry sand. Wet sand was alright, but they didn't have enough pad for the dry sand, so they had these tractors and bull dozers out there to shove the tanks across the dry stuff to get them up on hard ground where they could go. Then they would leave them. There is 21 feet of tide over there and here were these tractors going underneath the water. They are having a tough time getting a tractor here, and there they are laying all over the beach going under the water. That was the war effort, I guess, at the time.

[00:55:00]

Anne: Yes, I guess it was. So then when you came back, what was Natomas like?

Burt: Well, it hadn't changed much. It was only three years. They were pretty much still farming, and the housing really hadn't started up. We still had the wet — we still had a lot of water here in the wintertime. When they started building the houses here, they started allowing levees to be built even though they had not allowed the farmers to build up levees previously within levees. They are pumping water off the land into the drainage ditches and then into the river again.

Anne: Rules can change, right?

Burt: They are finding ways. I hope they come out all right. In this district, the levees along here are sand-filled. They dug the dirt out and pumped sand into the middle of that and then they used horses and scrapers to pull the levee up the rest of the way. The levee is dirt up about so high and then it is

sand filled in the middle, which makes it nice for any rodents and stuff like that. They can get in there and it caves in on them and it doesn't make holes through the levee. That is fine here, but this levee up here, the cross-canal levee up here, drains Pleasant Grove area and drains all the way to Roseville. All of that water comes down through here into Pleasant Grove and comes through that cross-canal levee is not sand-filled. It was dug with a dragline and there wasn't any sand there. It was adobe dirt and just adobe. It is all right, but it slips every once in a while. The second year, it washed out completely. We've had several slips since then. The water stays up there too long and it gets saturated and it just kind of smooths out, which it did here a couple of years ago.

Anne: Oh my.

Burt: Farmers got out and they had enough bulldozers around here to keep shoving it back till it stopped. That to me is the worry more than these levees around the district. They seep, and because of the sand, the water runs through them, but they will generally hold unless they get to seeping too much underneath. They are talking about raising the levees, what with all this new housing out here, and they won't let them put Auburn Dam in. So, they think they are going to raise the levees, but the water never runs over the levees; it always runs underneath as the pressure gets up — they seep that much more. All of a sudden, you get these boils and then the levee falls in. This one up here, it will slide down if it gets too wet.

[00:58:28]

Anne: I hope they are aware of the differences in the types of levees up here when and if they start "improving" them. Do you remember about the flooding in which Manuel Barandas and a number of other people came out to do sandbagging and all that?

Burt: Yes, that was in '55, the district just north of us, 1001. It broke up there at Nicholas and flooded that entire district. Well, this cross canal has a levee on both sides and the cross canal drains that area from Pleasant Grove out through there. Well, they were going to cut the levee right up here on the other district to run it into the cross canal and run it out to the river. They, my dad and uncle finally dragged the guy off the bulldozer, fortunately, to get it someplace up by Verona. They finally broke the levee upstream from Verona so the water that came into that district could get back out again. Well, when it came out, why, it went clear across — the force of the impact — all the guys' butane tanks and everything else were clear over in the Sutter Bypass. They didn't go down the river — there was that much force going out. So, you could see that if they had busted this levee right here it would have washed the second one out just like that. Anyhow it got into the cross canal and well down through the Yolo Bypass and the Sutter Bypass.

Kay: That was a pretty awful mess.

[01:00:04]

Burt: Which in one thing — oh I don't know. You get me started on flood control. Originally, when they built these levees in 1915, they had to get rid of that surplus water and so the state bought the flowage rights from the Sutter Bypass and the Yolo Bypass. They owned all of that ground and it runs right down to Rio Vista and through to the bay. When they get too much water so that the rivers can't handle it, it comes up and runs down the Sutter Bypass, then it crosses the river here and goes into the Yolo Bypass and runs all the way down to the bay. That went along for several years until the state thought "Heck, we ought to farm that stock, keep the brush cleared," so they turned around and sold that ground back to the farmers that they bought it from for about 10 cents on the dollar. The farmers could farm it

except between November to May or something, when the state had the right to flood it. When they did that, the head engineer went up and put Fremont Weir in. It's at 34 feet and our ground level around here is 29 feet, much higher than our ground level. When he did that, he wanted to force more water down the river and flush the sand. The rivers were navigable at that time and they wanted to flush them. Besides, he bought about 5,000 acres in the bypass at that same time. Anyhow, it has worked fine for years. Before the dams were in, Shasta and Oroville, the floods would come down and go out the Fremont Weir and everything would get out of here in two weeks, even if it broke a levee up above or something, but in two weeks it was gone. Now with Shasta and Oroville Dams, when the heavy rains come, they hold the water back and then they have to turn it loose before the next heavy rain. They hold it right at the top of the Fremont Weir and that saturates our levees all the way back and keeps it wet here longer. It used to be gone in two weeks, but now it will be here for months on end and it soaks up this cross-canal levee and it soaks up the other ones and just makes it wetter all the time. I've fought for years to try to get that Fremont Weir lowered back to ground level and they say, "Oh no, it will hurt people down below." Well there is eight feet of fall between there and the railroad bridge in Woodland, and the water would be gone in our district.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2.

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1.

Anne: All right. We were talking a bit about the flood control here and we took a little side trip to hear about the Fremont Weir.

Burt: Yes. I think if they took that thing out it would solve all their problems and they wouldn't have to raise the levees or anything else. That is between here and me, I guess.

Burt: You talked about Truxel here. My brother-in-law worked for Truxel for years. He was a rod man. Truxel was the engineer and he needed somebody to hold the tape on the other end. John and Dave Huffman. Hiram Huffman.

Anne: Oh.

[00:01:03]

Kay: Eljean, Burt's sister, and John Huffman, her husband, lived here since '55.

Burt: Dad farmed this ground by himself and then after the war I couldn't go back to school for some reason. I guess they taught me everything I needed, so I went to farming. My sister got married during the war so I, my brother-in-law, and dad farmed for years. Then he passed away and I farmed with my brother in law until '80, '82 someplace in there, and I bought him out and my son is doing the farming now.

Anne: So, it's still your land and still all being farmed. Kay you were mentioning that Burt's sister Eljean lives south of here a bit?

Kay: On Riego Road, the adjoining land here. We farm all this to the corner.

Anne: So what kinds of crops are being farmed here now? Is it different than what it used to be?

Burt: Beans used to be a big crop in this district, beans and alfalfa. Mostly alfalfa. Course, you couldn't raise any animals here. Most of the alfalfa is all shipped out.

Anne: Oh.

Burt: Hauled up on dry ground to where they keep the cattle. In the wintertime, you can't keep an animal out here — he would just get swallowed in the mud all the time. Most of our hay still today is shipped to the foothills or over to Petaluma. The old 5-wire bales, I can remember going out with dad and hauling them in to Sacramento and putting them in freight cars. I don't know where it went. We sold it to Waler Brothers or somebody and they sold it and put it on the train and it went down to the dairies, maybe all the way to Chino, I don't know.

[00:03:20]

Anne: Right. We were talking earlier about archeology, archeological excavations, and there was something called the Indian Mound and you were saying which one? So, there was more than one burial mound here.

Burt: I think there was one on the other side of the river down towards the other weir down there. I think the county has a park, don't they, on the other side of the river?

Anne: There is a park.

Burt: Helvetia Park. I think there was an Indian mound down there somewhere.

Anne: Was that in West Sac?

Burt: Yes. Then there was the one on the end of Powerline Road down here, and one up her in Verona.

Anne: Probably the one on Powerline Road is the one we go past and comment on during our annual historical tour of Natomas.

Burt: I can remember it has always been called the Indian Mound. Willeys farmed the place around there and they had a grain bin on top of it and everything else. It was four feet high and I don't know how long. I think a lot of the dirt they scraped off and used to build houses with on the other side of the levee.

Anne: Oh.

Burt: People dug in there. The Indians, I think, most of them were cremated. There might be some bones or stuff like that. You would see beads and stuff and fish sinkers. Wherever the high ground is, you talk about a steamboat through here. I know they call this the Bennett Mound over here — there is a little high section where the white house is over there. That would be out when the rest of this was all flooded through here. Clifford Bennett used to talk about rowing into Sacramento in his rowboat from here.

Anne: Imagine that!

[00:06:04]

Burt: The old Marysville Road is over there at Riego and that was generally as high as the water got.

Anne: Sorrento Road the old Marysville Road that is running down the east main drainage down in through there?

Burt: The east main was not there.

Anne: Oh.

Burt: It would be the other side, by more like Rio Linda Boulevard, and then it goes into up here up through Riego and follows into Pleasant Grove into Marysville. That was there before the levees were.

Anne: Oh, yes.

Burt: This used to flood back to that high.

Anne: I understand that was a trail that was used all the time by the Native Americans because it was high ground so that anybody that was coming out at that time would travel on that route because everything else was flooded, I understand.

Burt: Except for other high spots in the district like the Bennett Mound, probably called something else on the map at that time. All the levee districts were put in at about the same time, so it must have been quite a lake at some time when it didn't have the bypass and all just went down the river.

Anne: It would be interesting to see those pictures you were mentioning earlier that you have of your house being surrounded by a foot of water and you needing to get out to the road to go to school.

Burt: Yes, Bayou Way would flood all the time there. I know we have those pictures around here someplace. We'd have to look them up.

Anne: You were saying your family came from the German-Swiss border.

Burt: There is an umlaut over the "au" and my aunt used to be able to pronounce it. We have always been Lauppe — pronounced *Loo-pee*. In Canada, they are pronounced *La-ou-pee*, so I don't know.

[00:08:36]

Anne: Your family did not go to where there were other German-Swiss and be involved in cultural activities while you were growing up?

Burt: There is quite a dairy area up here north and a lot of German-Swiss came out there. I think Inderkums sponsored some of them to come out. There were the Scheibers and a number of other families up there. There were a lot of small dairies like this one with about 60 cows or so. The old dairy barn is out here. They made cheese here. I know the Crystal Creamery used to come up and gather the milk. They would have it in 10-gallon cans. With this levee road, the Garden Highway, and those trucks, the cans would get to bouncing around and out into the fields. The farmers would have to haul gasoline out to the tractors in the fields and you did that with a 10-gallon can that fell off the Crystal Creamery trucks.

Anne: A lot of Crystal Creamery cans around.

Burt: Everybody had the 10-gallon cans out here. In fact, everybody had racks on the back of your car to carry the 10-gallon cans with fuel in them out to the trucks.

Anne: Donated by Crystal Creamery.

Burt: Yes. They were found along the levee here. There were quite a few dairies up there and they had a lot of Swiss milkers and big Swiss sports, Herman Sons Hall in Nickolas. They have a Swiss club, but you don't have to be Swiss to join it.

Anne: Oh, ok everybody could join in the fun! Were there any favorite Swiss delicacies or Swiss dishes that you enjoyed?

[00:10:58]

Burt: Well, more German. My mother's name was Zoller, so that is really German. In fact, she was going to high school in World War I and we were fighting a Wilhelm Zollar at the time. She had quite a battle with that one. My grandmother was all German, with the noodles and everything else.

Anne: Good cooks. So, do you have some of those recipes, Kay?

Kay: I'm not much of a cook.

Burt: She's a real good cook.

Anne: Not those kinds of things, however, right? You were telling us about your family history, your childhood history, when you came back from the war. And now when did you meet Kay?

Burt: Well, when I came back from the war, my girlfriend had already got married, so she invited me to a square dance club. I couldn't go with her, she was already married, so she got me a blind date and that's where I met Kay.

Kay: Kathryn. He always called me Kathryn.

Burt: That's right.

Anne: Where would you go to this dance?

Burt: Oh, in Sacramento.

Kay: Was it up at the Cluny Clubhouse or the Coca-Cola place?

Burt: Yes. They had different dance places in town. They were never the same place twice. It was all up to where the caller wanted to be.

Anne: So, where the caller wanted to be is where you would go. The Inderkums were recalling a dance floor on their property along the river.

Kay: Is that right?

Anne: Do you remember that?

[00:12:57]

Burt: That was like Helvetia Park was on the other side of the river and there was a park on this side of the river, but I don't remember. I think it was on that Inderkum flat out there.

Anne: That is what they say. That is not where you did your dancing.

Burt: In fact, that house with the swimming pool, that was quite a place, just down below Inderkums. It was quite a thing at the time. I remember. Nayfee was his name and he owned a string of movie theaters. He came out and built that palatial mansion then at that time with a swimming pool.

Anne: No kidding. Was the pool inside?

Burt: That was way back in the '30s and the rest of us were still tacking two-by-fours together. They were the first ones along the outside of the levee.

Anne: That must have been something.

Burt: I can remember thinking, oh that is a huge mansion, but you look at it now and it looks small.

Kay: You wanted to show me which house it was, I remember.

Burt: It hardly even shows up now alongside of the rest of the Inderkum houses.

Anne: Now you are living up here in Sutter County, do have much reason to get into Natomas these days? Do you have much awareness of all the building going on?

Burt: Well, we're trying to get out of Sacramento. Sacramento County could care less for agriculture. They are all into houses and everything else. Agriculture has gone completely out. We used to go into Sacramento all the time for tractor parts and what not that we couldn't get in Woodland. Now I don't think you could find a tractor part in Sacramento. You would have to go into Woodland or Yuba City or somewhere else for a part.

Anne: Oh, really.

[00:15:17]

Burt: Newberts quit.

Anne: Right.

Burt: Newberts had the old Massey Harris Harvesters, and that was big during the war because they were one of the first self-propelled harvesters, and it was during the war. Canada could make them and for some reason the US needed all the steel for our tanks and everything else and couldn't build harvesters. There are a lot of Masseys sitting out in people's backyards. They are a bunch of junk now. They were the first self-propelled harvesters in the district. The rest of us all had the old pull rigs that

were built before the war. Those came out about that time, but for some reason or another, Canada could build them. They would ship them down here. Newberts had the distributorship.

Anne: That sure was a wonderful store.

Burt: Well, International Harvester and John Deere were there on T Street.

Anne: Oh really. How many acres are you farming out here?

Burt: Well, our son farmed around 1,000 acres. We still farm in Sacramento and in Sutter County. In fact, we still have the home place down in Sacramento. Then he farms some for Witter down there on Witter Road.

Anne: Now, that is the same Witter Ranch down there in Natomas, giving all those kids experience on a working ranch?

Kay: Yes, one of the boys.

Burt: We're farming Bob Witter's rice ground over on Radio Road, and in doing so we used to farm that triangle, which now has been sold and subdivided. Houses are being built on that ground on San Juan Road.

[00:17:42]

Anne: Was that Ed Witter's?

Burt: It was Witters', Ed and Bob's together. They sold that. Bob still has the piece up there by the radio tower, back of Bastio's. In order to farm that, Alan goes down and Ed says, "I've got to have that corn growing so that I can show them what corn grows like." So, Alan goes down and plants six acres so that the kids can see what corn grows like. You can't tear any of the weeds down on the levee, so he plants the corn and then the rats come up from all the levees around there and get most of the corn before he can harvest any of it. It is kind of a losing deal.

Anne: Yes. The kids, however, are getting a chance to see corn growing as they glimpse a bit of what life was like in that era that they wouldn't get otherwise nowadays. It really is a nice experience for them, but I now have a greater awareness of the larger picture.

Burt: It is costing us money. Corn, however, isn't worth anything now.

Anne: Do you remember or have any connections with that airport in Natomas over there? I don't know how long there has been an airport strip there.

Burt: Oh yes, that's where I got my commercial license.

Anne: Did you really! The airport is closed down now isn't it?

Burt: After the war, everybody came home and used their GI Bill to go to school. I had already learned all I could in school, so I went to use my GI Bill to learn to fly. I started out at Dupen. I got my private license out at the Executive Airport. Then Branstetter had that airport and the school there and

everything else and said, "Come on out and get a commercial license." Well, all that commercial is, is that you have to have more hours in a heavier plane. He had a plane, which was a surplus plane left over from WWII, that had 180 horsepower. It was big enough to get your commercial license. I went over and got my commercial from him.

Anne: Were you able to use your commercial license?

Burt: Not as far as commercially, but I flew.

Kay: He had an airplane.

Burt: After I had about 80 hours after my private license, I joined, or got a flying club together and together. We bought a Luscombe airplane, which was built in Dallas, Texas.

Anne: Oh.

[00:20:55]

Burt: *[Tongue in cheek]* Boy, I was a real sharp pilot, I knew everything about it. They sent me to fly that Luscombe back to California. That was quite an awakening because there is a lot of space between here and Dallas. Anyhow, I went back there. During the war, they had aircraft factories and they were huge, big old things. Luscombe started this little firm and they were making this little two-seater and in the process of making a four-seater. I got there expecting to see some huge airplane factory, and I got there and it was about as big as my hay barn out here. Guys on one side of the barn were riveting these planes together. On the other half of the barn were guys doing all the paperwork, the engineers, stenographers, and everything there for selling the thing. I think we paid something like \$4,500, which was a horrible amount for an airplane. They picked me up at the airport to go out and pick up my plane. It had been sitting out there, and he said, "We had a little rainstorm the other day, so it might be filled with water." So, we went and drained all the gas out of the tank out there on the ground just like that. I wondered about this a bit, and also about the carburetor and a few other things that maybe would have been affected too. Anyway, he checked me out on a few things. We took it out and flew around, and then I was on my own. Fortunately, they had just put a gas line from Texas to Los Angeles and I followed that up most of the way through Texas. Anyhow I got the Luscombe back here.

Anne: So, what would you do with it then?

Burt: There were 10 members in the club and so it was just a weekend thing. I took my future wife up in the airplane! That was a pretty big deal.

Anne: I'm sure it was! That's what did it, right Kay?

Burt: It was just a fun plane. I would chase parts with the thing, anything just so I could fly.

Anne: Sure.

[00:23:37]

Kay: He would look the fields over too.

Burt: It was time consuming. It was always a half a day by the time you'd go down there and get the plane ready, fly for an hour, land, talk for an hour, and by then your day was shot. That went on until we had ten members in the club and the plane wasn't flying too much. So, we thought we would take in more members. We took in two. Perkins was the thing. They had a little airport out at Perkins. He saw the poles, but he didn't see the wires. He banged the plane all up and that was right at the start of the Korean War. Heck, you couldn't find any other airplanes, so we dissolved the club, paid off the members, and quit. One of the members, Dick Willey, he's still mad at us. He was over in Korea at the time and I don't think he ever got his share of the plane back. I had kids to raise then.

Anne: When did your first come along?

Kay: '52.

Burt: Well, then when the kids got big enough and all started going to college, we needed a plane to find them, so we bought a 150. We then put our own strip in out here. In fact, I was on the planning commission in Sutter County and they were putting the airport in here, so I went ahead and had my ground zoned for airport in the county. I was in before the Executive Airport was.

Anne: It helps if you are on the committee sometimes.

Burt: They always wanted me to call them when I took off, and I thought, I was here first, they ought to call me when they want to take off.

Anne: That's good.

[00:25:50]

Burt: I finally sold the 150 for a bigger plane. I had a Sundowner for a while. I used that to check the rice. I get to know them down at the tower pretty good because I'd tell them I'm coming. I'd look at the rice and fly around down there. You get new controller's every once and a while: "You're supposed to report in 10 miles from the airport, you know." And I'd say, "Well, I took off within two miles of the airport." We'd go the round, I'd scare them, but anyhow. I'd have been up in the tower and told them where my runway was, you know. I did get in trouble with them. One time, a seed salesman came over and wanted to sell me some new alfalfa seeds. They had a new crop growing over in Davis, so I said, "Let's go over and take a look at it." We jumped in the plane and took off and you are across the river and I went to Davis, and by the time I got to Davis, this guy came running out and said, "You're in trouble. They followed you all the way with radar. Turn around and report in." I said, "Aw, shoot." I had to report in coming back. It was kind of a farce because this in the northern half of their radar approach control and Davis is in the southern half. Well, when I was coming back from Davis, I reported to the southern tower and they then switched me over to the northern tower, and by the time I got here, I was so busy fiddling with the radio, I didn't see any airplanes coming that would prevent me from landing here, so I did.

Anne: Short distance.

[00:27:53]

Burt: Branstetter used to have a parachute-packing thing down there. If you ever notice that tower/hanger down there has a long, what looks like a water tower with a chimney that sticks up in the air. Well, parachutes, you have to repack them every so many hours or something so they don't get stuck up. To repack them, you have to take them out and hang them out and get all the wrinkles out of

them, or you can jump out of the plane and that takes the wrinkles out of them. A lot of people with parachutes in need of repacking would come over and jump out of the airplane here and then they would repack them there in Branstetter. They would hang them for two days or so until the wrinkles would come out and then they could repack them again.

Anne: That's pretty good.

Anne: What can you remember about people from the Dust Bowl who started coming here in the '30s, you were saying.

Burt: I don't know if it was too labor intensive or not, they had beans needing hoers and stuff. Most of our hired help, well we had Mexicans also, but I get a kick thinking about the three bars in Old Sacramento. You would go down to the bars and pick your help up. They would go to work and then you would haul them back and I think there were only three. Now they have redone Old Sacramento and how many bars are there now?

Anne: Good point.

[00:29:46]

Burt: I remember we had sugar beets along the levee right where the mound is now. The approach to the bridge now, I guess they call it the Vietnam Bridge now, but the Elkhorn Bridge — we had sugar beets in there. Their shoes were about worn out and everything else. They were brothers and had come from Oklahoma. My dad hired them and took them over to the field. They didn't know how to prime siphons or do anything about irrigating, but they were mumbling. My dad said, "What's the matter?" He said, "We came from Oklahoma and lived right on the river and we sat there and watched our farm blow away, and then come out here and we set them to irrigate. We could have irrigated in Oklahoma. We were right next to a river." They had never learned about irrigating. They were waiting for the rains to come. Everything back East is just dependent on the weather. They didn't have irrigation like we do.

Anne: Think of all those lands that were lost just because of not using that method.

Burt: Since then, a lot of that is sprinkler irrigated now back East. That was interesting, I thought at the time.

Anne: They could really relate to this new technique here.

Burt: Especially for us here in the summertime, if it wasn't for the river or the snows on the hills we would be a desert. We don't get any rains and we like it that way because we can grow the crops and irrigate them just right. Back East they are dependent on the rains. I don't know how they cure hay back there.

Anne: I don't know how they cure hay here, actually, but I'm sure that's a whole other story.

Kay: Honey, you have done great. You've talked for two hours.

Anne: We really want to thank you for all your hospitality and for being willing to do this. It was certainly interesting.

Burt: I want to thank you for taking on something like this to keep the country going.

Anne: You're welcome. Thanks again.